

# Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

Scandal of doctors prevented from saving life in Britain...

Because they are refugees



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New victims lined up in 'war on terror'

page 7

Anger with Blair at union conferences

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Asad Rehman on the future of the left

page 10

Inside the NHS: echoes of 100 years ago

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Occupation of Iraq continues

US restricts inspectors more than Saddam did

THE US claimed that Iraq's restrictions on United Nations inspectors was the reason it had to go to war. Now it occupies Iraq it has placed more limits on UN-appointed nuclear experts than Saddam Hussein did.

The US has only allowed seven members of the International Atomic Energy Agency into Iraq.

The experts are restricted to one part of the Tuwaitha nuclear facility. Their assessment of the facility must be over in two weeks.

US soldiers will accompany the experts everywhere they go. The experts will not be allowed to investigate reports of radioactive contamination in local towns and villages.

US leaders have made it clear that this visit sets no precedent for a UN presence in Iraq in the future.

UN weapons and nuclear inspectors regularly visited the facility during 1991 to 1998. They also visited it between November last year and March, when Bush forced them out so he could launch a war.

Israel bombed the Tuwaitha facility in 1981. The US and its allies bombed it during the Gulf War of 1991.

The UN is less welcome there than it was during the years of Saddam Hussein's regime because the US wants to dominate Iraq.

More on the US occupation of Iraq—page 7

## The currency question Blair and Brown won't answer...

# WHY ARE WE PAID SO LITTLE?

MILLIONS OF words have been written about the euro this week.

But there is one currency question that neither Tony Blair nor Gordon Brown will confront—the scandalous poverty wages that millions of workers in Britain are forced to exist on.

One in five workers in Britain get below £6 an hour. That's just £240 a week for rent or mortgage, bills, childcare and food.

One in three children still live below the breadline—despite all the government's pledges to end child poverty.

Some of the lowest paid workers—many of them women, and many with no tradition of trade union struggle—have had enough.

They are fighting for more pay. But they also want to be treated with respect for the important jobs they do in society.

They are sick of the "profits before

people" business culture, with its bullying managers, that New Labour has injected into our public services.

Hundreds of low paid classroom assistants and other non-teaching staff were out on strike for five days across London this week in up to 52 schools and nurseries in London.

They are being joined by low paid workers in libraries, housing and parking departments as part of the fight to win an increase in London weighting—the allowance for the extra costs of living in London.

In Scotland nursery nurses, some of them on only £10,000 a year, are demanding a £4,000 a year increase

• continued on page 2

• Low pay strikes—pages 14 & 15



## Nursery nurses, health workers, council workers speak out

## NEWS

**●continued from page 1**

and to be valued for their vital role in childcare.

They are continuing a series of angry strikes that have involved up to 5,000 workers on the picket lines and demonstrations.

Hundreds of nursery nurses in Tower Hamlets, one of the poorest areas in Britain, are starting an all-out strike from this Friday over pay.

Poorly paid health workers in North Lincolnshire will be picketing outside hospitals in Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Goole on Friday as part of their series of strikes against the giant Carillion firm.

And next week workers at Whipp's Cross Hospital in east London will escalate their battle against privateers ISS Mediclean—striking for three days starting on Wednesday.

Porter and Unison branch secretary at the hospital Len Hockey told Socialist Worker, "The decision at Whipp's Cross reflects a changed mood among workers.

"The days are gone when NHS private contractors could just scare staff by saying, 'If you don't like it here get out the door.'

"We feel a new confidence to fight against low pay and the private companies in the NHS."

This feeling against low pay will be familiar to workers everywhere who face an uphill battle to survive, and the bosses' endless demands for longer hours, harder work or more flexibility.

Turn to pages 14 and 15 for more on the disputes and where to send messages of support and donations.

**Rotten foundations**

A REPORT by the government spending watchdog, the Audit Commission, found that the government's planned elite foundation hospitals may fail, wasting billions of pounds of public money.

It criticised the government's "star" ratings for hospitals. And it warned that some of the 29 hospitals the government has lined up for foundation status have poor management and risk running up huge debts.

The report also said the government had set too many targets, especially to cut waiting lists, which meant that other areas were neglected.

It said that many trusts had diverted money from medical equipment and vital maintenance work to pay private firms to do extra operations.

**Million still wait**

DESPITE ALL the government's targets, the number of people waiting for over a year for a hospital appointment nearly doubled in April.

And the total number of people on the hospital waiting lists is now back to over a million.

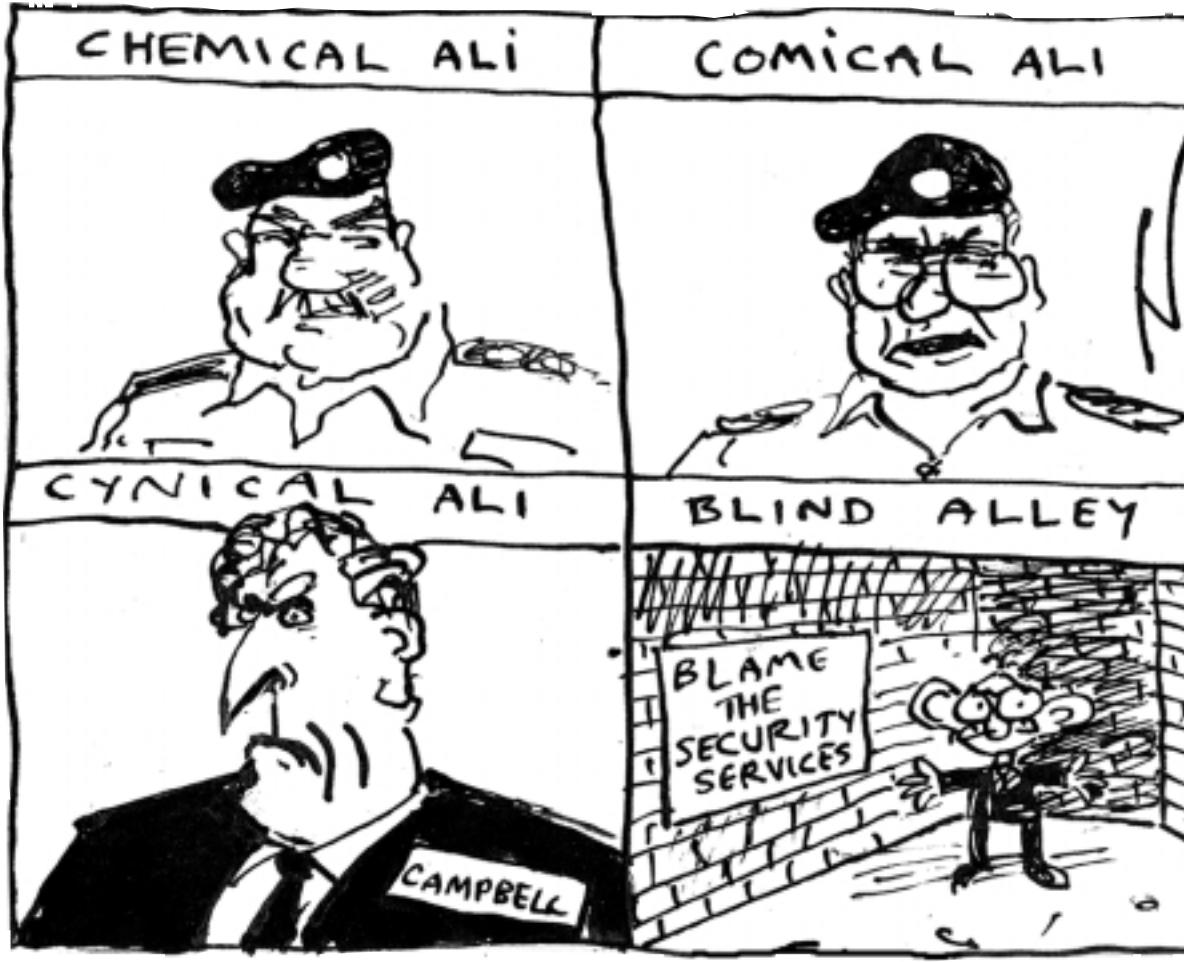
The doctors' BMA organisation has complained that the government has rigged the target for seeing 90 percent of accident and emergency patients within four hours.

The government only met its target for one week when the figures were being monitored.

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**IN BRIEF****Drowning at Ford plant**

THE FORD car company and two of its managers pleaded guilty last week to safety breaches which had contributed to the death of Christopher Shute, a contract worker, at its Southampton plant.

He drowned in a vat of paint. Managers Peter Preston and Paul McKenzie were due to be sentenced this week.

**Pressure on young carers**

MORE THAN 13,000 British children under 18 are working more than 50 hours a week to provide care for a sick or disabled relative while trying to keep up full-time attendance at school.

A report from the Children's Society and the YMCA found that children as young as five are spending longer than the adult maximum working week caring for a relative, often with inadequate support from public services.

**Barnet appeal against cuts**

HEADTEACHERS in the north London borough of Barnet will join forces to appeal for an emergency cash bail-out from the government because of a "massive shortfall" in funding.

Nick Christou, head of East Barnet School and chairman of the Secondary Heads' Forum, said his school's deficit was equal to between eight and 10 full-time teachers.

David Gray, a member of the ruling council of the National Association of Head Teachers, said in his South West England area 50 redundancy notices had been issued to teachers in Plymouth, 28 in Somerset, 48 in Wiltshire and 33 in Bristol.

East Riding council in Yorkshire warned this week that it could lose up to 100 teaching jobs and put some schools on a four-day week.

**Oil firm banks on law change**

THE HALLIBURTON oil company is notorious for grasping contracts in Iraq. But it is also screwing workers in the US.

Halliburton is delaying the planned bankruptcy of two of its subsidiaries in the cruel hope that a new law will go through that will cut the amount it owes to workers for asbestos-injury claims.

Hard right Republican senator Orrin Hatch is pushing legislation to halt a flood of claims against firms over their use of asbestos.

If he is successful Halliburton's projected payouts will fall from the \$4 billion it has agreed to pay out to settle 200,000 lawsuits to \$450 million—a 90 percent drop.

Halliburton was once headed by Vice-President Dick Cheney. Asbestos products produced or used by companies that became part of the Halliburton group caused hundreds of thousands of people to develop asbestos, lung cancer or mesothelioma.

New Labour recently gave Halliburton a £2.3 billion contract to run the IT services for the NHS.

# They hope we die before we get old

**Bosses are getting away with ditching pension schemes, leaving workers in poverty**

OVER 500 workers marched on Downing Street last weekend to protest against losing their pensions when their company went into receivership.

The issue they highlighted already affects tens of thousands of workers and could hit millions more.

Under present laws, when a scheme is wound up, people who have already retired receive their pension in full, but those approaching retirement can lose everything they put in.

Bosses usually escape with all their grossly superior pension benefits intact.

The protest was organised by the ASW Sheerness Pensions Group, which has fought for the past year to highlight the injustices workers face when companies

go bust.

ASW, formerly Allied Steel and Wire, went into receivership in July. This resulted in two of its final salary pension schemes being wound up at its plants in Cardiff and Sheerness, Kent.

Sheerness protest group chairman Keith Plowman said he had expected to retire on a pension of two thirds of his final salary.

But because the company has been wound up he is due "around half that and I'm one of the lucky ones. Some people here have lost up to 80 percent of their pensions."

The ASW action group has identified about 40,000 people whose pensions have been slashed when firms wind up their schemes.

This is normally because firms have gone under—but not necessarily.

Maersk, the shipping giant, closed its Sea-Land pension scheme last year. Workers saw benefits fall by half. Maersk is a profitable company.

The government is proposing to bring in compulsory insurance to protect company pension schemes.

But disgracefully New Labour wants workers to pay the price.

Pensions minister Andrew Smith was expected this week to scrap the rule which raises payments in occupational schemes by 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower.

If this rule goes then pensions can quickly be eroded by inflation—saving bosses billions.

The Amicus union said, "This is a very dangerous move. It is just another sop to the Confederation of British Industry."

Even the TUC, which has done precious little as companies have destroyed occupational pension schemes, said, "If inflation rose, pensions would be worthless and that would be unacceptable. Unions might have to think about negotiating higher wages." Yes indeed.

See the ASW action group website [www.pensiontheft.org](http://www.pensiontheft.org)

# Action over pensions robbery

JOHN HAYTER is a former ASW worker at Sheerness who paid into the pensions scheme for 30 years. He has a disabled wife.

He said, "Most people think their pensions are secure and separate from their employer, but they're not."

"I was relying on my pension. Now we'll have to sell our home and buy

somewhere cheaper. It will be away from the family."

"I've always worked hard and followed the advice of the government and pension experts, and paid into the company scheme which everyone said was the safest and best option to provide a retirement income. Nobody told me this could happen."

Some workers' fury over

pensions has boiled over into action.

Over 600 workers at the chemical company Rhodia are voting on strikes this week to defend their final salary pension scheme.

The vote at sites in Widnes, Bristol and Oldbury in the West Midlands is over the company's decision to end access to the final salary

scheme for new workers, and in protest at the company's management of the scheme for existing staff.

Hundreds of RMT union members at the Wiltshire and Dorset bus company have voted by more than nine to one to strike in defence of their final salary pension scheme.

Pension strikes rock France page 13

**Stop the War Coalition Activist conference Saturday 21 June 10-5pm, Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London W6**  
£5 admission fee. Phone 020 7053 2155 • PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ • [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk) • [office@stopwar.org.uk](mailto:office@stopwar.org.uk)

**Forums include** The Project for the New American Century Palestine Iraq after the war Globalisation and war Civil liberties What next for the movement

# Blair can't hide from his lies about Iraq

THE LIES told by Tony Blair to justify war on Iraq are coming back to haunt him.

This week the conference of Britain's fourth biggest union, the GMB, called for a public inquiry into events leading up to the war. If Blair was found to have lied, said the motion, he should resign.

The conference also supported the Stop the War Coalition and voted to review its links with Labour MPs.

Almost every day there are more problems for Blair.

Home secretary David Blunkett this week admitted, "It would have been better if we hadn't published that dossier."

He was referring to the dossier produced by Blair in January on alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Alistair Campbell, Blair's communications chief, has written to the heads of Britain's intelligence agencies accepting that the dossier "had not met the required standards of accuracy".

That's putting it mildly. The dossier was cut and pasted from a 12 year old student thesis.

## Nuclear nonsense

Blair pumped out still more lies this week, continuing to claim that Iraq tried to buy uranium from the African state of Niger.

The documents this claim was based on have been declared crude forgeries by International Atomic Energy Authority inspectors.

Blair says he has "a number of sources" for the claim apart from the forgeries. The inspectors deny any other source exists. Who do you believe?

## Pentagon admission

In the US too it emerged last week that a report by the Pentagon intelligence agency concluded last year there was "no reliable evidence" that Saddam Hussein

had chemical weapons.

At least we brought freedom to Iraq, argues Blair.

Yet the reality of what is happening today in Iraq is grim, and getting worse as the occupying forces lord it over people. No wonder there is resistance.

## The next steps

The millions who marched against the war were right. They said the dossiers produced to justify war were lies and that the war would not bring liberation.

We cannot rely on Labour MPs, most of who have been completely spineless, to bring Blair to account.

Next Saturday the Stop the War Coalition is holding a vital conference in London (details on opposite page).

Every anti-war activist should try to be there to discuss how we make Blair pay the price for his lies and how we prevent yet more horror.

**Reports on union conferences**  
pages 9 and 14

## OVER 1,000 ON STRIKE AT SOUTH YORKS BUSES



Sheffield bus strikers on the picket line last weekend. Full story page 15

Picture: Socialist Worker

# What the euro statement really means

GORDON Brown "yesterday set the government on course for another nine months of wrangling over the euro".

That was the verdict of the Financial Times business paper on the government's euro announcement.

It is bang on. All the 1.5 million words and fancy language in Brown's "assessment" are flannel to hide the reality that the government, and Britain's bosses, are split to the core over the issue.

New Labour's leading figures are deeply divided.

Brown's statement recalls the way Tory

prime minister John Major sought to paper over the cracks in his government over Europe in the early 1990s.

Just as with that Tory government, the issue will continue to erupt in bitter rows tearing at the heart of New Labour.

But there's one thing all sides are agreed on. In or out of the euro, workers will suffer in a drive for what Brown calls "greater flexibility".

"As part of radical reforms at a national, regional and local level, I propose that by next year almost all pay remits for public sector bodies will



Brown wants regional pay include a regional or local pay dimension," said Brown.

This means an assault on national pay and conditions agreements for millions of workers. It is a signal to national private sector employers

to follow suit.

The union leaders should stop meekly gazing at what is happening around them and state clearly that they will call action to defeat the regional pay plans.

Another thing is clear from the euro fudge too.

Taking Britain into the euro has been a central plank for Blair and his apostles at the heart of the New Labour "project". The divisions and this week's fudge leave that "project" looking weaker than ever.

If there were a referendum on the euro now Socialist Worker

would urge a no vote.

The whole plan is based on slashing public spending and driving through attacks on wages and welfare.

That does not mean giving an inch to the Little Englanders of the "keep the pound" brigade.

They also want to drive through attacks on us and wrap themselves in right wing nationalist rhetoric.

We need an independent, left wing politics, one which says no to the bosses' plans and solidarity with workers across borders.

Imperialism today: is the US unstoppable? What would socialism be like? Does the movement need political parties? How do ideas change? Is Labour just another Tory party? Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression? Is racism getting worse? What makes you working class? What sort of cities do we want? What is historical materialism? Is Chavez the new hope for Latin America? Can Palestine be free?



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## comment

# The road map to oppression?

THERE HAS been much optimistic comment on the meeting last week in Aqaba, Jordan, between US president George W Bush, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority representative Abu Mazen.

The fact that Bush seems to be putting his shoulder to the wheel and making a serious effort to implement the so-called road map, intended to revive the Middle East peace process, has surprised many people.

**ALEX CALLINICOS**  
analyses what the "peace deal" offered to the Palestinians will actually mean

into negotiations with the Palestinians.

But these moves, while important, don't mean that justice for the Palestinians is a prospect.

For one thing, the Bush administration—true to the spirit of democracy it is showing in Iraq—insists on deciding who counts as a "legitimate" Palestinian leader.

Yasser Arafat, despite the fact he is the elected Palestinian president, has been a non-person ever since Bush denounced him a year ago.

Washington was furious when Dominique de Villepin, the French foreign minister, visited Arafat recently.

Abu Mazen was hand-picked as the Palestinian prime minister by the Bush administration because the US and Israel believe he can be relied on to crush Palestinian militants—one of the main aims of the "peace process".

More misleading is the despicable belief that links of this kind, not to speak of the power of the "Jewish lobby" in US politics, mean that the United States is sound hand and foot to Israel.

The truth is that Israel is simply one of Washington's key allies in the Middle East.

From the US point of view, it is both an advantage and a disadvantage to have Israel permanently at war with the Arab world.

It's an advantage because it means Israel ultimately has nowhere else to go but the American alliance.

It's a disadvantage because the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians permanently threatens to get out of hand and destabilise the entire region.

That danger has become reality since the second intifada started in September 2000.

## Claim

9/11 made it easier for Sharon to get a very right-wing Republican administration to see things his way, but this doesn't mean that US and Israeli interests are identical.

In the past few weeks it has been Sharon who has been shifting.

He forced the road map through the Israeli cabinet, used the word "occupation" to refer to the plight of the Palestinians—something that is anathema to extreme Zionists who lay claim to the whole of Palestine.

He also said that some of his illegal Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories will have to go as part of a final settlement.

These moves must reflect pressure on Sharon from the US administration. This shouldn't come as too much of a surprise.

In the early 1990s Bush's father withheld \$10 billion worth of loan guarantees from Israel to push the government of Yitzhak Shamir

# inside the system

## IN THE FRAME



No. 14  
**BERNARD KERIK**

NEW YORK'S ex police chief has been appointed to bring law and order to Iraq.

When asked about the US failure to find weapons of mass destruction, Kerik said, "I don't care." He says he wants to "show the Iraqi people why the US is so great".

Kerik is also on the board of Taser International, which produces "non-lethal" weapons for law enforcement.

## Bush and Blair vetoed peace

TONY BLAIR says the threat of an "unreasonable" French veto on the UN Security Council forced him to abandon efforts to get a second resolution backing the war.

This is a lie. Britain and the US dropped their plans because they knew they would lose.

An investigation by the Financial Times has discovered that all six of the "undecided" states on the Security Council planned to vote against a second resolution.

The US and Britain needed backing from five to secure a majority.

## Met's home movie sale

LONDON'S MET police force is doing a nice little sideline.

The Met turned up at a big TV industry conference this year flogging off 3,000 hours of footage shot by police cameras in London.

The Met's sales team offered film from CCTV surveillance units, and roadside cameras to TV production companies.

They also offered to hire out police uniforms, buildings, vehicles and even police officers for use in TV programmes.

\* Thanks to Steve Lax for this story.

## The Iraq visit that wasn't

THE MEDIA trumpeted Blair's recent visit to Iraq's second city, Basra.

In fact, he only got as far as the outskirts as officials feared protests.

The school he visited was reconstructed specially for the day.

He spent most of his time holed up in one of Saddam Hussein's heavily fortified palaces.

And these will be towered over by a US-armed Israeli colossus.

# All we are saying is give oil a chance

"GIVE OIL a chance," sang Exxon Mobil shareholders during a meeting in Dallas.

Some oil companies, like BP and Shell, have tried to give themselves a "green" makeover in recent years, pretending they care about the environment.

But there was no such window-dressing for the biggest oil company of them all, Exxon Mobil.

The shareholders loudly demanded their right to pollute the world, bursting into song to drown out environmental protesters.

The shareholders then threw out resolutions about reducing global warming and promoting renewable energy.

"We won't jump on the



Oily: Lee Raymond

bandwagon just because others may have a different view," said Exxon Mobil's chief executive, Lee Raymond.

"We don't invest to make social statements at the expense

of shareholder return."

An Indonesian activist shareholder, Radhi Darman-syah, addressed the conference, saying, "You are killing my brothers and sisters."

Top boss Raymond had his microphone switched off and contemptuously told him to "come back another time".

Raymond keeps a low profile—appearing in public only to attack any attempt to limit global warming.

He is unapologetic about doing business with some of the most repressive regimes in the world. And he refuses to add gays to the company's equal opportunities legislation.

\* Thanks to A Bhattacharyya for this story.

## WHO SAYS?

"We're here to kick ass. Let them think the Marines are prepared to top 'em all if they step out of line." LIEUTENANT COLONEL ERIK GROWBSKY serving with the US Marines in Iraq

"I don't often feel like I've been taken for a sucker. How could I have been so naive?" MICHAEL PORTILLO former Tory leadership contender on how he feels betrayed by Blair over the war

"My god, if this is the best intelligence they have and we find nothing, what about the rest?" HANS BLIX chief UN weapons inspector on his thoughts when British and US intelligence tip-offs proved useless

"I would not put it past the Americans to plant their own weapons of mass destruction in Iraq." DENIS HEALEY former deputy leader of the Labour Party

"I think capitalism has got everybody's goat." WALTER BECKER Steely Dan band on their new album Everything Must Go

"We will apply all necessary combat power to ensure that opposition is removed." LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID MCKIERNAN US command in Iraq

"There is a danger of being sucked into a quagmire." BRITISH MILITARY COMMANDER in Iraq

Do you have a story for inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

## No mercy for army widow

THE WIDOW of a soldier based at the Deepcut army barracks in Surrey is being deported.

The Home Office has told Deveen Clarke that she must leave Britain by September after she lost her appeal against deportation.

The Deepcut army barracks is where four young soldiers have been found dead in suspicious circumstances

over the last two years.

Deveen's husband, Mario, who served at the barracks, was shot outside his home in Hackney in east London.

Despite all the talk of "our boys" during the war against Iraq, the Home Office has shown no compassion to the grieving widow of a serving British soldier.

It has refused her appeal to stay on compassionate

grounds, saying she does not have a "marriage visa".

She will be able to stay until a headstone is erected on her husband's grave, then she will be sent back to Jamaica.

"I have to go back immediately afterwards," said Deveen.

"I'll never be able to see it again and the thought of that devastates me."

## NHS photo opp flop

"FIND A good TV backdrop."

That's what the Department of Health told bosses at UCLH hospital in central London when health secretary Alan Milburn decided to pay a call.

UCLH is being rebuilt under the Private Finance Initiative.

Milburn wanted to be pictured next to some expensive equipment bought with government money.

Trust bosses tore through the hospital tearing down newspaper cartoons that joked about the government's disastrous PFI schemes.

The entrance bosses

thought Milburn would use

was freshly painted.

But at the last minute the venue switched because the scanner he planned to pose with had been paid for by the voluntary sector.

Milburn opted for another site at the hospital to be pictured near a government-funded scanning machine.

Managers rushed around, spending hundreds of pounds hastily repainting doors.

But they failed to inform doctors of the visit.

Seriously ill cancer patients were forced to miss urgent scans while Milburn was interviewed for television and pictured next to the scanner for two hours.

The reality of working life in Britain

# 'What has changed in the last 100 years?'

## STOKE POTTERIES CLOSURES



Workers at Wedgwood's Alexandra factory after hearing that their jobs will be axed

Picture: The Sentinel, Stoke

## 'We're reeling from this kick in teeth'

"WE ARE just reeling. We didn't expect that. It was a real kick in the teeth. Nobody could work afterwards. Everyone was dumbstruck."

That is how Norman Baddeley reacted to the huge blow that has hit the Staffordshire city of Stoke-on-Trent.

Norman works at the Eagle pottery factory in the town, as do his wife and son.

On Wednesday of last week the firm's bosses, Waterford Wedgwood, announced it was closing the Eagle and Alexandra factories, throwing 1,058 people out of work.

The Stoke area is still known as "the Potteries" because of the long history of pottery firms dominating local employment.

Over the last decade waves of redundancies and closures have devastated the area, leaving the name virtually meaningless.

Paul Kelly, whose wife works for Waterford Wedgwood, told Socialist Worker, "Some workers heard the news on the radio before

they were told at the factory.

"They don't know what they're going to do now. It's all going to be warehouses round here."

This is the third swathe of redundancies Waterford Wedgwood has forced through in recent years. It sacked 1,400 workers in 2001 and others in 1998.

Developers were already making bids to take over the factories at the end of last week. Bosses want to move production to China.

Waterford Wedgwood will continue to employ 2,400 people at

the Barlaston factory in Stoke but many workers feel under threat.

"People feel cheated," said Adrian Ashman, who works at the Barlaston factory. "We were told the work would stay in the UK."

"This is a big loss. Everything's been run down. All of the potteries will be gone soon. Waterford Wedgwood said the Barlaston factory is safe for now, but I think it will be gone in ten years."

"There's nothing left round Stoke-on-Trent," said a woman who also works at Barlaston.

"The pits have gone. Royal Doulton's closed last Christmas. Whole families work at the Eagle and Alexandra factories so it's not just one person who's going to lose their job or house."

"The big redundancies in the Potteries started around ten years ago," says Stewart Crehan from Stoke. "Since then it's been constant. There's always something in the news about closures."

"The closure of Eagle and Alexandra is unprecedented. People

feel that Stoke is going to turn into a ghost town. All the new jobs seem to be in call centres."

"This is going to affect people who've spent ten, 20, 30 years working for Waterford Wedgwood. How are men in their 50s going to be retrained?"

The company claims it has to throw people on the dole because the business is "unsustainable".

But it made £5.2 million profits last year. The man with the most shares in the company is Sir Tony O'Reilly. He is also chairman of the Independent News and Media group and has a personal fortune of £1.3 billion.

Disgracefully the government has said nothing about the job losses.

Hundreds of people signed a petition against the closures in Stoke town centre on Saturday. As areas like Stoke are devastated, trade unions need to start leading a fight.

That would also help to marginalise the Nazi BNP, which won a council seat in Stoke in May.

**'Pottery boss Tony O'Reilly has a personal fortune of £1.3 billion'**

Almost 100 years ago the socialist author Robert Tressell wrote a novel, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, which powerfully described the exploitation of workers.

Healthcare assistant Phil Reilly compares his own experience today working in a hospital on the Wirral in Merseyside.

THE YEAR is 2003. I work in the NHS and I find myself relating more each day with the character Frank Owen (the house painter) from The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists.

Can anyone explain to me why I work in a hospital with a three-star rating, yet seriously ill patients or, as the hospital prefers to call them, "clients" are expected to be happy with lying in soiled linen?

The hospital has to wait for the clean linen to be delivered and distributed amongst the wards, as linen washed by an outside private firm out of the local area is a cheaper option.

Can anyone explain why it's acceptable for "clients" or, as I prefer to call them, "patients" to be left half-naked while staff wait for clean nightwear to be delivered to the wards along with the clean linen?

Please tell me I'm overreacting, but I was frustrated and angry to find myself in a situation last year that I found most upsetting.

Seriously ill people are mostly rushed into hospital and do not usually have the opportunity to pack toiletries.

It's the hospital's responsibility to provide adequate soap, wipes and towels so they can wash whilst they have their own toiletries brought in. Of course not everyone can afford these luxuries (homeless or poor).

Sadly this is not always the case, as I found last September. After being rushed into hospital and not having their own toiletries, a patient needed to be bathed, especially as the patient was incontinent.

I found that not only were there no wipes to wash with, but there were no gloves either.

I decided to do the almost daily routine of walking from ward to ward to find the essentials, only to find that the other wards were in the same situation.

Wards were reduced to washing patients with wipes that were normally used for walls and

floors. One ward was even using incontinence knickers for wipes.

This was in the same month the hospital was rewarded with three stars. How was this possible?

I consider the management of this hospital (Wirral Hospital Trust) to be extremely superficial.

A new revolving door on the main entrance (costing over £1 million) and beds with phones, TVs and internet access are seen as important moves within the hospital, but simple gloves, wipes and linen are not.

Talk about sell the sizzle, not the sausage!

If the living conditions of the patients isn't bad enough, then the poor staff surely need your pity.

Since the trust contracts came into force in the early 1990s, staff have been expected to work alongside one another on different pay scales, and expected to work nights and weekends for no extra pay.

In fact, we have only just started to receive bank holiday money.

For example I recently worked:

Saturday night: 21.00 - 07.45

Sunday night: 21.00 - 07.45

Monday late: 16.00 - 21.30

(I was meant to come to work at 14.30, but I took it upon myself to wait until four o'clock.)

Tuesday early: 07.30 - 15.30

Wednesday early: 07.30 - 15.30

Thursday early: 07.30 - 15.30

I had no extra pay, nor did I receive much sleep. So much for the caring profession!

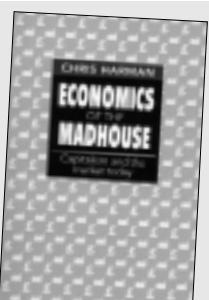
Back to Frank Owen. I'm scared and frustrated by colleagues' lack of concern for these problems raised and have in fact started to see them as the norm.

I have actually heard people saying such pathetic excuses as "It's not for the likes of us." Who are they to be so much better than us?

I'm truly sorry for my lengthy ramble, but I just needed to let off steam to someone that cares!

**Economics of the Madhouse**  
by Chris Harman

£3.50 from Bookmarks—  
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Healthy food costs more

## Smoking, diet: should we change lives or lifestyles?

I WAS shocked but sadly not surprised to hear of New Labour's plans to make people who smoke, are overweight or who don't take regular exercise sign agreements with their GP.

Any breach of these agreements could potentially jeopardise access to NHS treatment.

New Labour would like us to believe that these are simply lifestyle choices, and therefore the consequences for health should be the sole responsibility of the individual.

The wealthy consult their dieticians, lifestyle gurus and personal trainers on their

wellbeing—and then pass judgement and punishment on the rest of us. In contrast the majority of people in this country have very little choice at all.

Good quality fresh food is not cheap. I have a friend on income support and she has £30 a week to spend on food for herself and her two kids. She doesn't simply choose to buy cheap junk foods. She has no choice.

We are also constantly bombarded with advertisements for junk foods—a despicably large number purposely aimed at children—many of which claim to be healthy options.

We have no control over this as individuals. The government does. But I don't see New Labour demanding that big food corporations sign agreements not to push junk products or to stop making huge profits from the sale of food.

Nor do I see the government genuinely tackling the causes of smoking or refusing to benefit from the huge sums of money it collects from tobacco taxation.

And as for exercise, New Labour have continued to drive enjoyable physical activities from school life, to close down playgrounds, playschemes and youth centres which kept young people active and

off the sofas.

They provide no free health and exercise centres. Presuming you have any energy left after working increasingly longer hours and if you've got the money you can choose to attend a health centre. If you haven't then that choice just doesn't exist.

We can blame the individual but that just lets the government and policy makers off the hook. If we want a healthier society we need to change the reality of the lives of working class people, not their "lifestyles".

Molly Mahamdallie  
North London

## Italian? You can vote in referendum

ON 15 June all Italian citizens will be called to vote in two referendums.

One is for social control of harmful electromagnetic emissions from the national grid.

The other asks for the extension of Article 18 to employers with fewer than 15 employees and is particularly important.

At the moment only 6 percent of Italian employers, those with more than 15 employees, are bound to apply Article 18—giving the right to be reinstated in the job previously held should a judge rule a dismissal unfair.

A yes victory in this referendum will be a blow to the neo-liberal trend towards uncertainty in the workplace, and the Berlusconi government. A yes victory concerns the dignity, job

security and freedom for all workers. A right is either universal or it does not exist.

For the first time Italians living abroad and belonging to the AIRE lists will be able to vote by postal vote in this referendum.

Rifondazione Comunista invites everyone to vote yes. And we ask political bodies, unions and social groups in Britain to publicise as far as possible in their mailing lists and newspapers this appeal.

A victory on the extension of workers' rights in Italy will be a victory for all European workers. United we can win.

Anyone wanting more information on the yes campaign please e-mail [dirittipertutti@yahoo.it](mailto:dirittipertutti@yahoo.it) or phone 07946 561 926. Enrico Mandelstan Partito della Rifondazione Comunista UK branch

## Protest tonic after Evian

WE SPENT a few days in Evian before it was closed to all but residents for the G8 summit.

There was little good feeling among locals as their beautiful town became an ugly militarised zone. Hundreds of heavily armed soldiers were everywhere. A monstrous camouflaged missile launcher pad marred the lake.

Moving into Geneva we experienced the anti-capitalist movement armed not with bombs and guns, but with visionary ideas and an enthusiasm to put them into action.

This was truly inspirational. Hundreds of protesters visited the Globalise Resistance and Stop the War stalls we

helped set up, and many were impressed with the broad-based groups we had been part of in Britain.

As first time protesters on an international event such as this we would like to thank all of the Globalise Resistance and Swiss ATTAC organisers for their support and leadership, encouragement and patience, which were highly impressive.

We will be taking back our exciting experience to Leeds, and will be returning to Paris in November for the European Social Forum and will make sure that from Leeds our numbers will be more. Sally, Paula, Rosa and Steve Leeds

## Just a cover

IN YOUR article on the euro, "What's Behind This Row?" (Socialist Worker, 31 May), you missed the obvious point.

The row is a put-up job to

keep the plebs arguing while

their pensions and health

services are stolen away.

The cancer of privatisation has been spreading across the European Union, but nothing like it has in Britain. The strong opposition put up by continental trade union movements, of which we have just had a shining example from the French, has limited or even blocked it.

European Union countries are in fact further apart than they were 40 years ago, with Britain now at the bottom of the league. The same applies to the comparative levels of public investment. Hugh Lowe West London

## YOUR VIEW

### Our DU demo brings result

JUST TO let you know we held a small demo outside our local army careers office.

We were highlighting in particular the issue of depleted uranium and its use in past wars, and also the depleted uranium shells tested at Dundrennan on the Solway Firth.

The army closed the office and pulled down the shutters. Result!

The public were also very interested in our campaign.

Barry Donnan  
Irvine

### Respect key to 'crap' jobs

IN RESPONSE to Nidhall Eddemy (Letters, 7 June), who asked who would do the crap jobs in a socialist society, the answer is simple—anyone who is unemployed.

It's better than dole money and they will get treated with the same respect as everyone else.

The trouble comes when you pay them less and they are treated less favourably and looked down on.

I have done lots of crap jobs, and you feel crap because you are treated like crap.

I don't think anyone would mind doing so called "crap" jobs if they were treated with respect.

R Tyler  
London

### Think what this cash could do

I READ recently in the Daily Express about a fat cat boss getting pay such as £35 million, and three insurance bosses getting £170 million between them.

I was totally appalled.

They think they are worth it, but I know it is legalised robbery.

Just think what a socialist policy could do with the amount they are receiving.

C A Douthwaite  
Barrow-in-Furness

### Where are the factories too?

TONY BLAIR not only told parliament of chemical weapons, but of factories actively producing them across Iraq.

He said in the House of Commons on 24 September last year, "The dossier shows that Iraq continues to produce chemical agents for chemical weapons, and has rebuilt previously destroyed production plants across Iraq."

Please could someone ask why these factories cannot be found?

David Roberts  
by e-mail

### Iraq and the media war

THE ROW over the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is the lead story by "intelligence" author Stephen Dorrel in a special issue of Free Press—Iraq and the Media War.

The booklet is published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

Other articles include an analysis of "embedding" by David Miller of the Stirling Media Research Institute.

Anyone wanting copies of the booklet can obtain them from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 23 Orford Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9JU. Phone 07774 607 419.

Barry White  
London

### obituary

## Linda Morgan

MANY PEOPLE will be deeply saddened to hear of the death of Linda Morgan last week after a short illness.

Linda became a political activist in the mid-1970s following her involvement in the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. She became a key figure in the rank and file organisation and was elected to her union's executive on a socialist platform.

Having joined St Albans SWP in 1977 she became a leading figure in many local and national campaigns.

It was in the Great Miners' Strike of 1984-5 that Linda's greatest gifts came to the fore. Her humanity, anger against the Tories and political judgement won her huge respect, especially from miners and their families. She had a corrosive ability to

dispel sectarianism.

Wearied by the Thatcher years, Linda took time out to travel. However, it was no surprise to find that Linda found a new home in the global anti-war movement.

The tenacity and wisdom she brought to our stop the war group was fundamental to its success.

Linda was an outstanding fighter who blended clarity and warmth with a formidable intellect.

We will miss her greatly. Our thoughts are with her partner Steve and her daughters Jo and Sarah.

Linda's funeral and a celebration of her life will take place at West Herts Crematorium (Garston, Watford) at 3.20pm on Thursday 12 June. Everybody is very welcome. Jane Hardy

# 'War on terror' sees new victims lined up

*Iran and North Korea could be next on the US hit list argues Kevin Ovenden, even while the chaos goes on in Afghanistan and Iraq*

THE neo-conservative warmongers in the White House have taken critical steps towards attacking more countries even as occupation brings further suffering to the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The two states next on George Bush's "axis of evil" list are Iran and North Korea.

The most hawkish members of the Bush gang are turning to the same lies and propaganda they used before the invasion of Iraq to now prepare for possible war against these two countries.

And on the same day last week the neo-conservatives moved to make war more likely.

US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz announced on Tuesday a redeployment of US troops in South Korea to allow an attack on North Korea with fewer US casualties.

His boss, Donald Rumsfeld, threatened Iran with "serious" consequences, claiming it was trying to develop nuclear weapons.

There has been a marked increase in US threats against Iran recently.

Tony Blair added to these on his visit to Iraq when he directly warned Iran against "interference" in Iraq.

## Occupation

The US-led administration in Iraq has again signalled what its occupation is all about.

Its senior adviser to Iraq's ministry of industry and minerals announced that dozens of Iraqi state-owned companies are to be privatised within a year.

The administration had previously said it would wait until the creation of an elected Iraqi government before beginning the sell-off.

But Paul Bremer, the imposed governor of Iraq, last month cancelled a national conference of Iraqi political parties and groups which was supposed to pave the way towards elections.

There is to be no delay in "steering a clear course" towards a free market economy, as Bremer puts it.

The Iraqi ministry controls 48 state companies. Foreign businessmen from the Gulf states and mainly US multinationals are

lining up to take them over.

The arrogance of the occupiers, combined with daily suffering, has fuelled rising resistance from ordinary people across Iraq.

People in the city of Fallujah, in central Iraq, last week demolished a police station in protest at the occupation. It was attacked the day before by a rocket-propelled grenade, killing one US soldier.

The US military was aiming to establish a base of operations there. It is pouring 1,500 extra troops into Fallujah to crush the local population.

## Iraqis protest

Townspeople have repeatedly attacked US forces since troops opened fire on a protest one week into the occupation, killing 18 unarmed Iraqis.

Standing in the rubble of the station Arkan Habib told journalists, "The rocket-propelled grenade attack was a warning to the Americans.

"We have told them more than once that this is a residential area and we don't want them here."

Unemployed Mezher Al Jumeili said, "We are not loyal to Saddam. He was a dictator and a tyrant.

"Now he has gone, but the Americans are acting like dictators themselves."

Attacks on occupation forces are increasing in small towns and cities, including Baghdad. The US military is suffering a higher rate of casualties than it did during the war.

The occupation forces have been unable to establish law and order, but instead are turning their fire on political opposition.

In Fallujah the majority are Sunni Muslims. US troops targeted a key force among Shia Muslims when they raided the Baghdad office of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq at the weekend.

Two days earlier US forces seized 20 members of the group in the town of Baquba.

Bremer had promised the group would be part of a coalition government.

The US military has now admitted it will have to leave larger numbers of troops than expected in Iraq.

**US troops patrol in Fallujah where Iraqis demolished a police station in protest at the occupation**

Picture: Getty images/Mario Tama

# Ready for 'pre-emptive' strike?

**THE strategic redeployment of US troops is part of the necessary preparations if the US chooses to go to war again.**

**It has caused near panic in South Korea and nearby Japan.**

**The US has stationed troops on the border separating North and South Korea for 50 years, since the end of the Korean War.**

**It is now pulling them back to bases deeper into South Korea. That will leave them out of range of North Korea's army should the US decide to launch a war.**

**However, the South Korean capital, Seoul, will not be out of range. It is just 37 miles from the border and within the sights of huge North Korean artillery.**

**North Korea's main strategic deterrence over the last 50 years has been to threaten to turn Seoul "into a sea of fire" should the US and South Korean forces attack.**

**US undersecretary of state John Bolton repeated calls for the use of "pre-emptive military force" last week against North Korea and other states.**

**Wolfowitz added that it would not be enough for North Korea simply to abandon its nuclear programme for the US to lift its economic blockade and threats to attack. It would have to change "in other ways as well".**

**Bolton widened the target list, saying, "The logic of adverse consequences must fall not only on the states aspiring to possess weapons of mass destruction, but on the states**

**'It's about protecting US power across the globe'**

**supplying them as well."**

**He and the neo-conservatives have accused Russia and China of supplying the means to make such weapons to Iran, Libya, North Korea and other states.**

**Part of the thinking behind the troop redeployments is to put pressure on China and Russia as well as to police what one US official calls "an arc of instability" from the Balkans through the Middle East and Central Asia across to the Korean peninsula.**

**Some 80,000 US troops are to move from Germany to bases further east in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania—Washington's little Warsaw Pact on Russia's doorstep.**

**US forces are moving out of Saudi Arabia, also a target for the neo-conservatives, into new bases in the Gulf state of Qatar and in Iraq, a ground assault away from the heart of Iran.**

**The US presence is quietly**

**increasing in Central Asia—bordering Russia and China.**

**Thailand has volunteered to take thousands of US troops from bases in Japan, which would put them back in South East Asia in large numbers for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War.**

**The excuse for all these aggressive moves is the "war on terror". But they are part of a strategy which long predates 11 September 2001 and was laid out in neo-conservative think-tanks such as the Project for the New American Century.**

**It is about projecting US power across the globe and facing down any potential military and economic competitors.**

**But it also means the US state putting itself face to face with the immense feeling of hundreds of millions of people across the globe against imperialism and rule by the multinationals.**

## AFGHANISTAN

### Karzai begs for troops and cash

**BRITISH** generals leaked to the media at the weekend that they feared getting bogged down in a "quagmire" in Iraq.

**Eighteen months after the fall of the Taliban, that is precisely what has happened in Afghanistan.**

**A bomb attack killed four German soldiers in the capital, Kabul, at the weekend.**

**Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, was in London receiving**

**an honorary knighthood from the queen and begging Tony Blair for more troops and cash.**

**Karzai has been dubbed the mayor of Kabul as his rule does not touch the rest of the country, which is under the control of rival warlords.**

**One of them,**

**Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is suspected of the attack at the weekend. He was once the Afghan warlord most favoured by the US.**

**He has now allied himself with regrouped Taliban elements who fought a serious battle with forces loyal to Karzai last week,**

**resulting in the deaths of 49 people.**

**US troops have pulled back from most of the posts they had occupied on the Pakistan/Afghanistan border.**

**The Kabul bomb attack shows the hold of Karzai and the Western forces sent to shore him up is weakening.**



Hamid Karzai and Bush

My first month on Preston council

# We're fighting on every issue

**Michael Lavalette**  
won a council seat for the Socialist Alliance in Preston in the local elections in May. Here he describes his first month in the council chamber



THE ELECTION result was a shock, but a tremendous success for the Socialist Alliance.

In the last month I have received messages of support and congratulations from all over the country.

This breakthrough was a welcome boost to socialists everywhere.

The success of the Socialist Alliance in Preston has meant that we are now taken seriously as a political force in the city.

It also means that a whole layer of labour movement activists are looking at what we are doing and considering their position.

At the Socialist Alliance meeting after the election we recruited seven new members—one of them a regional full-time official with the Communication Workers Union.

The meeting was fantastic. Everyone in the room spoke, and everybody was bubbling with ideas about what we should do next. Nobody was afraid to disagree. There was real debate.

It is now vital we do not let people down. We can't rest on our laurels.

The Socialist Alliance is not like all the other parties who disappear into the council chamber for the years between elections.

Similarly we are not interested in the political wheeling and dealing between the major parties that shapes council business.

We want to be open, inclusive, accountable and democratic.

We want to be approachable so that people can bring their problems to us.

That means dealing with people's queries about their housing, or various aspects of their environment.

In a sense we are trying to be like a kind of "community shop steward".

Our first regular local newsletter thanked people for voting for us, passed on our contact details and advertised a Stop the War meeting with George Galloway.

We have also arranged a number of surgeries in the ward. Local councillors in Preston don't usually do this.

We have now set up two surgeries where people can come and meet us.

We are going to hold them regularly each month. They will take place in a local community centre and the mosque.

But if this was all we did then we would be no different to other councillors who reflect local issues. We need to do more than this.

At present there are two vital issues—the SATs tests and foundation schools.

Preston City Council does not have responsibility for either education or health.

But as working class representatives we want to expose New Labour's attacks

HERE ARE many hundreds of people who could help solve the chronic staff shortages and long waiting lists in the NHS. They are not being used because the press and politicians treat them with hatred and suspicion.

They are refugee doctors.

The waste of doctors' talent, skills and energy is just one example of how the skills and willingness to work of all refugees is thrown away by government policy.

Last week the British Medical Association and the Refugee Council organised a conference, "Supporting Refugee Doctors to Practise in the UK".

The BMA knows of 965 doctors who are refugees or asylum seekers in Britain.

"These are just the ones who volunteered to register on the database," said Deng Yai from the Refugee Council.

"There are about 1,000 others or even more out there. The number of refugee doctors is estimated at 2,000."

They are highly trained in areas such as child surgery, general practice and gynaecology.

The top three countries they have fled from are Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran.

Many live in London. The second biggest group—some 21 percent—are in the north west of England and Yorkshire.

One West Midlands delegate at the conference commented, "The refugees' skills match where we have got a shortfall. For instance, we've got shortages of anaesthetists and there are 24 of them on the database."

Deng Yai added, "When you look at the specialisation of these doctors, and then at the people queuing up to see a GP or a consultant, it is such a pity."

"They are an untapped resource that is not taken full advantage of. They would make a difference to so many people's lives."

Dr Edwin Borman from the BMA, urged, "Refugee doctors are a valuable resource when the NHS needs more doctors."

"It makes moral and economic sense to help them overcome the difficulties they face."

Azhar Hammadi, an Iraqi, trained as a paediatrician. But she can't get a job in a hospital helping cure sick children.

She told Socialist Worker, "It all became too much. Now my job is as a health worker with refugees."

"When I left Iraq it was just six months before my graduation. I had been training for seven years in paediatrics."

"It was a big decision for me to sacrifice my future. But the government had started to target activists

and some of my colleagues were process of claiming asylum from working. That accounts for a third of people on the BMA and Refugee Council's database.

"I managed to carry on my studies after leaving Iraq. When I eventually came to Britain in 1995 I wanted to go on to be a consultant.

"It has been too difficult, so much waiting, money, and problems.

"I have citizenship here.

"I'm British and I'm part of the workforce. But in this country people look down on you for being different."

The anti-refugee climate in Britain is the root cause of the problem. Refugees are presented as a burden, not people who could help everyone.

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# This doctor trained for seven years to treat children. She can't get a job in a hospital

# Because she's a refugee



## 'I used to have my own doctor's surgery'

A GP at the conference from Iran spoke of his frustration that he cannot use his skills.

"I used to have my own doctor's surgery in Iran.

"I live on £54 a week. Out of that comes some rent money and bills to pay. I had the ability to earn good money in Iran. If it wasn't for the government I would go back there tomorrow.

"I would like to be involved in the health system and to communicate with English people to improve my language.

Words Helen Shooter  
Pictures Jess Hurd reportdigital.co.uk



**FIGURE IT OUT**

## 2000

is the number of refugee doctors that could be working to improve the NHS and improve healthcare for everybody, but who don't because of the way the asylum and immigration system works.

**'I claimed asylum but I didn't want benefits'**

"Before I came to Britain from Albania in 1997 I was training in obstetrics and gynaecology.

"But I have been really frustrated. The English test is not a language test, it is used as a barrier. I feel like a failure after all those years of studying.

"At the moment I am at home looking after our child.

"We have indefinite leave to remain in Britain. But the television only says about refugees that they are trouble, they are a burden, they all come here in the back of a lorry.

"It's just prejudice.

"They judge you before they know what you can or can't do."

**'These people could play a big role in making the NHS better'**

These are early days. But if we get it right we can forge a new relationship between councillors and those they represent.

Communication Workers Union conference

# The political ferment has reached everyone

THIS YEAR'S conference of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) was the most political ever.

There is sometimes a sense in the union that the "big politics" discussions are the preserve of relatively few activists and that the rest do not really get engaged until the nitty-gritty discussions about pay, jobs and hours.

If that were ever true, it certainly wasn't this year.

The hall was packed for debates about Iraq and Palestine, globalisation and the threat from the BNP.

It wasn't just the formal debates. Speeches on every issue touched on wider politics. The pensions discussions touched on the French mass strikes, the discussion of honorary membership led to a passionate argument about New Labour and the firefighters!

Most of the CWU delegates are manual workers in the Post Office or telecom firms and are instinctive Labour voters. They are the people who home secretary David Blunkett claims "back the war while the middle class liberals wring their hands".

Yet these delegates voted unanimously to support George Galloway against the witch-hunt inspired by New Labour. No delegates spoke against the union affiliating to the Stop the War Coalition.

The political ferment around the war has not just touched 100,000s of students, school students and activists. It has changed the worldview of many workers.

One sign of that was the sale of over 400 copies of Socialist Worker during the conference.

Unions must do something about the bullying boss, the pay packet that doesn't stretch to the end of the month, the scandal that some postal workers do up to 70 hours a week and that British Telecom wants to export call centre jobs to India to slash costs.

The absence of action over such questions can cause cynicism and disunity. There were danger signs at the CWU conference.

The union was deeply split during the recent election battle between John Keggie and Dave Ward for the post of deputy general secretary. Some of this was a left-right split but there was also a geographical basis to the division.

There were renewed signs of this regionalism at conference, although there were also powerful voices calling for unity.

The most effective way to pull the union together is national action over pay and other issues.

The conference passed a motion calling for substantial increases in both basic pay and London weighting.

Steve Higgins from Merseyside told Socialist Worker, "We really need a battle over pay but there is a

Charlie Kimber</p



Asad Rehman (left) joins protesters at the G8 summit in Evian

Picture: Ray Smith

# A new political home

**Asad Rehman** from the Stop the War Coalition opens a new series in Socialist Worker about where the movement goes from here

THE ANTI-war movement has to be seen in the context of what we built when we opposed war not just on Iraq but on Afghanistan. The strength of our movement was its breadth and its depth. The core of the movement has been increasing in size and in depth of knowledge.

We weren't just turning people out for demos—we built a real movement.

The anti-war movement is not just a tactical alliance over one issue. Rather, it is the politicisation of a whole new generation, both young and old.

There is a rising awareness of issues around imperialism, the Project for the New American Century, and oil. This is not just in one section of the population, but among a really wide layer of society.

So even if there is a dip in the level of activity, the movement is still larger than most movements are at their height.

People saw that in the beginning the anti-globalisation movement had a big impact on the anti-war movement.

Now I think it is the other way around. The anti-war movement is feeding back into the anti-globalisation movement.

You saw that in the protests at the G8 summit in Evian. Ordinary people showed a real affinity with the anti-war aspect of the march, with the anti-war slogans, chants and banners.

I saw the same thing at the European Social Forum in Florence and at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. The local

papers in Porto Alegre reported that the contingents that got the biggest applause were the Palestinian and anti-war groups.

You can go into any cafe or ride in a cab and people talk about how the war was about imperialism.

What used to be the language of the left is now the language of many, many people.

The involvement of the black and Muslim community at all levels of the anti-war movement was fantastically important.

This alliance gives us the opportunity to think strategically about other issues like welfare and poverty, and the disillusionment with New Labour over the war and over domestic issues.

Are we able to articulate the concerns of this layer of society, the concerns of people who are looking for a new political home, who are worried about privatisation, neo-liberal politics and so on?

Political ideas which once would have been seen as abstract are now the way people describe their personal experiences.

This is something we haven't seen for 20 or 30 years.

There are three groups we need to draw together—the Muslim community, the social movement and the trade unions.

These could form into an electoral force to offer an alternative to the politics of despair in places like Burnley and Oldham.

We can be in the process of refounding the Labour Party. Would that mean being inside Labour or outside Labour? Would that involve being a social movement or forming a political party?

All these questions are fluid and up for discussion.

The mainstream parties are all in decline. They have shrinking numbers of activists. Many have resigned from Labour, but there is a danger they will just drift.

We want to create a space and a political home for them.

We have to recognise that we have even greater opportunities than came after the anti-Vietnam War movement.

People have a real sense of responsibility. No one wants to make mistakes and let this opportunity slip.

I was in the Labour Party for years. I joined when I was 14 and left when they dumped Clause Four.

This morning I heard an announcement about the health service. I am still amazed at how right wing New Labour are. They do things the Tories daren't do.

More and more people are so disillusioned with Labour, on international and domestic issues.

People in the anti-war movement say we came close to bringing Blair down. Well, we still might do it.

Blair relies on people trusting him, but they don't any more. It does remind me of Margaret Thatcher. We thought she was invincible, but when she became a liability it was only a matter of time till she was dumped.

#### Dynamic space

The question is, what do we replace Blair with? Another New Labour clone?

I can't see people flocking back to Labour unless there are massive changes.

If there is a viable alternative, people will come around it. This is our job.

We don't just want a movement of the left. We don't need another revolutionary party. There is the Socialist Workers Party already. We need an old Labour party with revolutionaries in it, like the Scottish Socialist Party.

They went from one MSP to six because people want to punish Blair by going for a viable political alternative. If they can do it in Scotland, we can do it here.

We need a democratic, socialist party like Rifondazione in Italy. Rifondazione involves trade unions, community groups and the anti-globalisation movement.

It is an inclusive organisation that has had a huge impact on politics in Italy.

A dynamic space is opening up.

There are groups like Muslims for Justice and Peace and the Newham Public Affairs Campaign that mobilise for demos but also involve people in wider political campaigns,

lobbying MPs, challenging Islamophobia and so on.

There is a deeper political maturity in the Muslim community than ever before.

On the demos, there were lots of young Muslim women acting as stewards and helping to organise things—who would have thought that would be possible a few years ago?

It is something that those of us who occupy both spaces, the Muslim and the left, could only dream about.

The Muslim community is not a single bloc. But it is a community that is disproportionately affected by poor educational opportunities, by high rates of unemployment and so on.

There are traditionally two polarities in the community, a situation that goes back a long way.

The mosques and the Muslim infrastructure provided a place of worship and a way the community could gather together.

From that came the Muslim youth movements of the 1980s. These second generation Muslims became political over fighting racism and fascism. They took their fight to the Labour Party and to local communities.

But we took our eye off the religious institutions. Right wing Islamists were gaining influence in the mosques.

They pushed the idea that the mosques, local councillors and the police could be the advocates for all Muslims and represent them.

The anti-war movement was the chance to recapture the mosques. The involvement of young Muslims was a symptom of the alienation people felt, the kind of frustration that exploded in the riots in Burnley and Bradford a couple of years ago.

But the anti-war movement meant that the progressive elements in the community won the battle over engagement with wider society. So the mosques became another centre of organising against the war.

The right wing Islamists told people that they were on their own, that the West was at war with Islam.

But young Muslims went on the anti-war demos and found huge numbers alongside

them waving Palestinian flags, and said, "How can you tell us we are alone?"

And also the fact that the movement was global had a big impact. Pictures of the demos here on Al Jazeera had a big impact in the Middle East.

This created space for a new working relationship between what I call political Islam and the secular left to develop.

And this is happening here. The Stop the War Coalition was a great example of how different groups can work together.

I was invited to speak to school students at Mulberry Girls School, in Tower Hamlets. The other speaker was Lord Faulkner, from the Home Office.

He backed the war, of course, but he spent time talking about the Stop the War Coalition. He had to recognise that the movement had done more to bring different sections of the community together than anything else.

He said he had to give us credit for the fact that he was being asked about imperialism and international relations by 14 year old school girls.

Some Muslim organisations say we are marginalised because we don't have Muslim voices representing us.

The war showed that it wasn't about being a Muslim, it was about politics. That's why George Galloway, a Scottish Catholic, is the MP for the Muslim community.

Traditionally, Islamic groups said you can't work with the left. Now people are saying that we occupy similar space and we can work together.

Now we have no communication problems. Different groups have worked together and trust each other. And as people are saying this and experimenting, their politics are developing all the time.

Asad is speaking at the Marxism 2003 event in London. He joins a platform on 'Racism and fascism today' Saturday 5 July at 11.45am

**MARXISM2003**

For details see advert on page 3



## in my view

# Sell it like Beckham

WILL DAVID Beckham leave Manchester United? That's the question every tabloid newspaper is asking.

And in the chase to get the latest scoop, the exploitative world of big business and football is being exposed.

One friend of Beckham says he feels Manchester United have betrayed him. He feels he is being "traded round like a piece of meat".

I can hear the groans already: "Surely Martin is not going to ask us to sympathise with one of the world's richest football stars?" But he has got a point. Of course football has always been about making money and buying and selling players on the open market.

But now with the possible transfer of Beckham, football agents have gone one step further. They openly boast on TV of selling "The David Beckham Product".

He is no longer seen as a footballer or a person. He is a commodity, a brand for multi-national corporations to buy and sell.

If you are so inclined, you can now get reports on Beckham's marketability and the estimated share price increase of any club he may join.

Some jumped-up City type has even worked out Beckham's different market values as an individual, married or divorced.

Just imagine. There are City analysts praying that he doesn't get a divorce. Why? Because they will get a bigger return on their investment if he remains married!

You see, multinational corporations have a problem. If a suited fat cat from Shell, GlaxoSmithKline or even Manchester United plc came knocking on your door asking for your money or support any sane person would slam it in their face.

Therein lies the strength of Beckham. He is the respectable face of corporate football.

### Searching out new markets

Manchester United has an annual turnover of £146.1 million a year. Merchandising accounts for around £10 million and yes, you guessed it, Beckham products dominate.

Analysts believe the club's base is something in excess of 50 million people. The club has its eyes firmly set on foreign markets.

The United brand has a 79 percent name awareness in China, which could add another 20 million supporters to United's fan base.

The club wants to open up this market. Its 2002 business strategy document states:

"With 50 million fans worldwide, our twin-track business strategy is to grow existing and new domestic revenues while also unlocking the substantial commercial potential represented by the club's global fan base."

Beckham is the man who can unlock doors.

In the wake of his recent much publicised tour of the US and the Far East the promotion men follow in behind. They are searching out new markets, selling television rights and football merchandise as they go.

So why do United want to let Beckham go? They now fear that Beckham is becoming bigger than the club, and that is a dangerous thing.

For the last few years the club has been preparing for his departure and making sure that it is carried out on the club's terms and at the same time protecting its profits.

Beckham's huge popularity meant that in November 2000 United were able to sign a deal with Nike worth £300 million over 13 years.

The whole business of shirt sales has been handed over to Nike. The club now receives a guaranteed income rather than depending on the popularity of their players.

Added to the £30 million price tag on Beckham, that represents judicious business. Management have now decided that they have exploited Beckham to the limit and they want to cash in on their investment.

But no one should feel sorry for Posh and Becks. They will go on living the high life. At the last estimate they were worth a staggering £125 million and any new signing will see Beckham pocket another £32 million over four years.

Martin Smith

## REVIEWS

*TV A new film charts George Orwell's journey from a privileged background to socialism*

# FROM ETON TO BARCELONA

THIS YEAR is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the writer and socialist George Orwell. BBC2 is showing documentary-drama *George Orwell: A Life in Pictures* this Saturday, which charts both his artistic and political development.

The most intriguing question about Orwell is how an Eton schoolboy went on to become perhaps the greatest critic of class privilege and tyranny writing in the English language.

Orwell was the product of successive elite institutions of the British Empire at a time when it still directly controlled vast swathes of the world.

From a "lower upper middle class family", as he very precisely described it, Orwell went to public school and suffered the usual brutalities.

Eton's role, then as now, was to prepare the sons of the ruling class for taking up the reins of power. Orwell left Eton and joined the imperial police force in British-run Burma, and became, in his words, "part of the machinery of despotism".

This experience left him revolted. He left the Burmese police and was to become increasingly radicalised in the 1930s as economic depression swept the advanced capitalist countries, throwing millions onto the dole.

He began to identify with the poor and dispossessed. He worked as a waiter in Paris and lived among the homeless in London. He wrote about these experiences in *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

He then embarked on a journey through the industrial north ravaged by mass unemployment. For all his sympathy with the poor and the working class, this is still a picture of workers as victims.

It was Orwell's decision to go to Spain to help in the fight against



The real George Orwell



George Orwell, played by Chris Langham, fought against fascism in the Spanish Civil War

Franco and fascism that was to be a decisive turning point in his life.

Something more than Orwell expected greeted him there. The workers of Barcelona, where Orwell had headed, had not been content just to fight Franco but had taken power themselves.

As Orwell puts it in his brilliant record of these events *Homage to Catalonia*, "workers were in the saddle". The working class were not mere victims, but actively transforming society.

This revolution was crushed. The Communist Party played a crucial role. Orwell witnessed this first hand as he had returned from the front in May 1937 when the revolution was suppressed.

Fascism triumphed in Spain and Orwell was determined to halt its further advance. The film shows how he grappled with finding a socialist response to the imminence of war.

He was convinced that the threat

from Hitler would produce the same response among British workers that Franco's threat had evoked in Spain.

He even thought that the Home Guard created by the government (of Dad's Army fame) would radicalise into Spanish-style workers' militias!

Yet with the failure of any revolution to materialise, Orwell became increasingly disorientated and pessimistic.

He even joined the BBC's war propaganda unit for two years.

Unable to stomach this any longer, Orwell left and wrote the novels for which he is best known, his parable of revolution *Animal Farm* and the big brother world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The film is done as a series of mock newsreels with an actor playing Orwell.

This is interspersed with interviews with people who knew Orwell and genuine contemporary news footage. This is slightly confusing.

The film tends to take the common sense view that all revolutions end in tyranny.

Despite this it is still well worth a watch.

Above all it should act as a good reason to read Orwell himself, especially *Homage to Catalonia*.

**Mark Thomas**

George Orwell: *A Life In Pictures* is broadcast on BBC2 this Saturday at 9.05pm. All of the books mentioned above are available from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to [www.bookmarks.uk.com](http://www.bookmarks.uk.com)

### On television

Five to catch this week

**Surviving Extremes**  
Monday, 9pm, BBC4

Interesting series about people and harsh environments. This week it features the Tuareg of the Sahara.

**Early Doors**  
Monday, 9.30pm, BBC2

Comedy in the tradition of *The Royle Family*.

**Fighting the War**  
Sunday, 9pm, BBC2

Seven-part documentary series on the Iraq war starts. How much of the truth will it reveal?

**Coolies: The Story of Indian Slavery**  
Monday, 9pm, BBC4

How people were moved around the world, and the crimes of the British imperialists in India.

**State of Play**  
Sunday, 9pm, BBC1

This constantly interesting thriller about the media, politicians, oil and the state is nearing its conclusion.

Compiled by Charlie Kimber

## BOOK

### Prison is not a 'holiday camp'

From the Inside  
Ruth Wyner  
Aurum Press, £16.99

RUTH WYNER and her colleague John Brock were sentenced to five and four years in prison in 1999. Their crime was to respect the confidentiality of the homeless people who used their hostel.

The police charged them with wilfully allowing drugs to be used and sold on their premises. Their conviction had huge consequences for all of those workers who, against all

obstacles, attempt to support the most vulnerable in society.

This is an account of Ruth's experience of prison life and her battle to retain her sanity.

She points out that most of the women in prison are victims themselves.

Many are addicted to alcohol or drugs as a way of dealing with a life of poverty and isolation.

Prison is rife with drugs. Ruth points out that in 1999 out of 84,911 mandatory drug tests in prisons 17,789 were positive.

Some of the most interesting parts of this book are the points

Ruth makes about young offenders, women prisoners, homelessness and the legal system.

She points out that Britain's prison population is the highest per capita in Europe and it is expected to increase further.

If you were ever in any doubt about the reality of prison this harrowing, emotional and painful account will shatter any illusion. Prison is not a "holiday camp".

It is one of the most degrading, dehumanising, and soul-destroying environments.

Beccy Palmer

## meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@swp.org.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE



Big ideas in informal settings

**Marxist forums**

BARNESLEY

**Who benefits from Third World oppression?**  
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Barnesley Central Library, Shambles St.**BATH**  
**How do we fight fascism?**  
Sun 15 Jun, 4pm, Percy Community Centre, New King St.**BIRKENHEAD**  
**Weapons of mass deception: does the media control our ideas?**  
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Oxton Green Community Centre, Christchurch Rd.**BIRMINGHAM HARBOURNE**  
**The grand strategy of the American Empire**  
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm, Open University Centre, Harbourne High St.**BIRMINGHAM KING'S HEATH**  
**Palestine: road map to peace?**  
Thu 17 Jun, 7.30pm, Dance Workshop, Mosley Rd.**BIRMINGHAM SPARKHILL**  
**Do the media control our minds?**  
Thu 12 Jun, 7pm, Shahenshah Restaurant, Ladypool Rd.**BOLTON**  
**Confronting the new rulers of the world: the movement after Evian**  
Tue 17 Jun, 6.30pm, Bolton Town Hall (off Newport St).**BRIGHTON**  
**Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience**  
Thu 26 Jun, 7.30pm, Phoenix Community Centre, Phoenix Place.**BURY**  
**Does the media control our ideas?**  
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Arts and Crafts Centre, Broad St.  
With Chris Bamberg.**CAMBRIDGE****Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?**  
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, CB2 Internet Cafe, Norfolk St. With Chris Nineham.**CANTERBURY****Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?**  
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Pascucci's Cafe, High St.**CHESTERFIELD****Is there an alternative to capitalism?**  
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Assembly Hall, Urban Education Centre, Marketplace.**COLCHESTER****The bloody history of British imperialism**  
Mon 23 Jun, 8pm, RAD Hall, South Way.**COVENTRY****Is revolution possible?**  
Wed 25 Jun, 7.30pm, Methodist Central Hall.**CRAWLEY****Is fascism still a threat in 2003?**  
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Three Bridges Community Centre, Gales Place.**DONCASTER****Is fascism still a threat in the 21st century?**  
Thu 19 Jun, 7pm, Women's Centre, Cleveland St.**FAVERSHAM****Road map or dead end: can Palestine be free?**  
Mon 23 Jun, 7.30pm, Anchor, Abbey St.**GATESHEAD****Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?**  
Tue 17 Jun, 7pm, Trinity Centre, High St (opp Woolworths).**HARLOW****Is fascism still a threat in 2003?**  
Wed 18 Jun, 8pm, Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm (by ambulance station).**HOVE****What will a future socialist society look like?**  
Wed 16 Jun, 7.30pm, Vallance Community Centre, Sackville Rd. With Paul Thatcher.**BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY****Does the media control our ideas?****BRIGHTON****Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience****BURY**



## FRANCE



French workers take to the streets

Picture: Martin Shakeshaft

# Crunch time for pension strikers

THE TRIAL of strength between French workers and their Tory government reached a decisive stage on Tuesday.

The government pressed ahead with its attacks on workers' pension rights, presenting its plans in the country's National Assembly.

The plan would force workers to work for more years and pay more to qualify for a lower pension than the one offered now.

After what was a bank holiday weekend, trade unions called another national strike and round of demonstrations on Tuesday.

The strike once again saw much of transport across France shut down.

Teachers, the vanguard of the movement, once again struck and

marched in massive numbers.

Bank workers, council workers, some engineering workers and many others also staged strikes.

The battle over pension rights has been raging for almost a month now. There have been repeated national strikes of public sector and some private sector workers.

### Millions join fight

Tuesday's action was the third strike in four weeks. And each one-day stoppage has seen millions strike and up to two million people join demonstrations.

Some groups have gone further than one-day strikes. Teachers in thousands of schools have been taking indefinite strike action.

As well as the pensions plan they

are also battling an attack on education which would mean job cuts and could open the way for privatisation.

Some rail and public transport workers have also gone beyond one-day stoppages, staying out after the last national one-day strike last week.

The government is combining a hard stance with manoeuvres aimed at dividing the opposition.

It has sought—with only limited success—to keep key groups of workers out of the pension battle by promising that their special pension arrangements will not be affected.

It has also offered some concessions to teachers, and was due to meet teachers' leaders again on Tuesday.

### Key moment

The battle in education faced a key moment this week, with France's national "baccalaureat" exams (roughly equivalent to Britain's A-levels) due to get under way on Thursday.

The government was seeking to turn parents, students and wider public opinion against the teachers by raising the prospect of disruption to the exams.

Teachers' union leaders responded by threatening to maintain their strikes through Thursday unless the government backed down.

The two sides stood nose to nose as Socialist Worker went to press. One side is likely to blink before Thursday and whichever side does will shape what happens next.

# Trade unions must unleash full fury

THE French government has been aided by the divisions inside the main parliamentary opposition Socialist Party (roughly equivalent to Britain's Labour).

Newly elected Socialist Party leader Francois Hollande has sought to rebuild the party's fortunes by reflecting the popular mood against the

government's plans. He has even joined some demonstrations.

But key Socialist Party figures have come out in support of the Tory government plans.

Last week former Socialist Party prime minister Michel Rocard declared, "To call for the withdrawal of the government's plan is stupid. When we come back to office we

would pursue similar policies."

This has encouraged the government to stand firm.

Some key union leaders are also allowing the government to believe it can push its plans through.

These union leaders, in the CGT and FO federations, are calling for workers

to strike—but are holding back from unleashing the full power of workers in all-out strikes.

This is causing frustration among some groups of workers, who last week blockaded rail lines and motorways, and occupied buildings in some areas.

There were also some attacks on local offices of the Medef

bosses' organisation, which supports the government. In La Rochelle in western France the Medef office was burned down.

The key to winning the pensions battle is to spread the all-out strikes among wider groups of workers—and to press union leaders to stop fighting with one hand tied behind their backs.

## ZIMBABWE

# Strikers shut country down despite repression

ZIMBABWE IS in ferment after a big strike closed down much of the country's economy last week.

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main parliamentary opposition to President Mugabe, called the action as an intended "final push" to bring down the government.

It failed to do that but won wide support, especially in the cities, from people who are fed up with food shortages, soaring unemployment, collapsing public services and lack of democratic rights.

The MDC clearly still has strong support from large sectors of workers.

The stay-away from work lasted five days and closed many factories, banks and shops. Some workplaces closed because their bosses want Mugabe out. But in most cases management wanted to stay open but workers did not turn up.

Security forces and Mugabe's party militia killed at least one opposition protester and mobilised in large numbers to prevent demonstrations in city centres.

Morgan Tsvangirai, the opposition MDC leader, was arrested twice and now

faces treason charges.

Other senior MDC officials arrested include Japhet Ndagbeni-Ncube, the mayor of Bulawayo, and Tendai Biti, a Harare MP.

The repression is real. But Bush and Blair are using it in an entirely hypocritical way.

The US State Department last week denounced Mugabe for responding to peaceful attempts at public protests with "an ongoing wave of violence and brutality".

Although it is horrible, Mugabe's crackdown does not compare to the way the US forces sometimes deal with protest in Iraq.

Further action in Zimbabwe is now planned.

Mugabe's government looks increasingly vulnerable. But there are many questions about what will replace it.

Workers and the poor will have to insist that their interests dominate in a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, not those of managers and multinationals.

The MDC's favoured policies of opening up markets and working with Western governments will be disastrous. Such policies also make it harder to mobilise people to risk their lives to bring down the government.

## PERU

# Mass action rocks the man from the IMF

MASS STRIKES and protests rocked the South American country of Peru as anger exploded against the government's International Monetary Fund (IMF) backed policies.

Hundreds of thousands of teachers have been on strike for four weeks demanding higher wages. They have been joined on strike and in demonstrations by students, small-scale farmers, health workers and others.

Just over a week ago President Alejandro Toledo declared a state of emergency. Troops were sent onto the streets and clashes left scores of workers injured and one student dead.

But the attempt at repression failed. Teachers stayed out on strike and tens of thousands of workers marched, in total defiance of the state of emergency.

This forced the government to broker a deal with teachers' leaders who are now consulting their members on it.

The teachers' specific grievance was that Toledo had not honoured an election promise to raise their wages.

The deal under discussion would see teachers get an immediate

15 percent rise, with a pledge that salaries would be doubled by 2006.

Toledo was elected after the popular uprising which forced former president Alberto Fujimori out nearly three years ago.

Fujimori ruled for over a decade and created a near dictatorship, with savage repression and worsening economic conditions.

The former World Bank adviser Toledo pledged to create one million jobs a year but official unemployment figures stand at over 10 percent.

Over half of Peru's 27 million people live on less than 75p a day.

Toledo has made things worse by agreeing to impose strict spending limits in a deal with the IMF aimed at ensuring world bankers continue to get debt payments.

Fewer than one in seven Peruvians now support Toledo's government.

The protests in defiance of the state of emergency, and the fact that the government has offered concessions, shows that the power of mass protest that toppled the dictator Fujimori can also derail Toledo and his IMF backers.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

## In brief

March says no to new runway

OME 500 people marched against plans for a third runway at London's Heathrow airport last Saturday.

A third runway at Heathrow would require the demolition of hundreds of homes, local schools and churches, destroying two village communities.

The protest had a lively carnival atmosphere, with plenty of placards and chanting.

**SIMON BASKETTER**

## Group 4 should be in the dock

NE OF the defendants on trial over last year's fire at the Yarl's Wood refugee centre run by Group 4 has had the case against him thrown out of court.

Another defendant had all charges dropped.

But Kladjan Gaba had only a brief taste of victory last week.

"Kladjan walked out of the dock only to be rearrested immediately and taken all the way up to Scotland to the Dungavel refugee detention centre," explained one campaigner.

The trial of the remaining even defendants continues.

**For more details on where to send messages of support and donations e-mail sady\_campaign@yahoo.co.uk**

## PCS elections now under way

OME 288,000 civil servants in the PCS union are voting in national executive elections.

The Democracy slate of the socialist Left Unity group and the PCS Democrats is standing in an attempt to overturn the right wing Moderates group who have dominated the union.

The Left Unity website has resources and guidance for all PCS members who want to maximise the vote. Go to [www.votyleftunity.org.uk](http://www.votyleftunity.org.uk)

## Defending jobs and claimants

IVIL SERVANTS in job centres and social security offices in east London have pledged a fight against threatened office closures which could see 173 jobs go.

Local PCS union branch chair Oliur Rahman says, "Staff are extremely worried about the job cuts and the effect they will have on those who use local benefits and job centre offices.

"Rather than providing a reduced service to the most needy members of the public he department should provide properly staffed service."

## Refugee protest against injustice

HUNGER strike in Margate in Kent by 24 refugees ended on Sunday.

A similar protest began in Dover on Monday where up to 100 people were refusing food.

The protests are against section 55 of the Asylum and Immigration Act, which withdraws all accommodation and food from people if they fail to claim within a certain time after entering Britain.

Kamran from Azerbaijan old Socialist Worker, "My wife and I arrived a few weeks ago. We washed and rested before going to claim asylum. We were old we must be lying because we are too clean."

**JON FLAIG**

**Refugees, Racism and War—East Kent Human Rights Fair, Sunday 22 June from 10.30am, Quarterdeck, Zion Place, Cliftonville, Margate.**

## Firefighters

# Take matters into our own hands

**ACTIVISTS WERE fighting to stave off surrender at a special conference of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on Thursday of this week as Socialist Worker went to press.**

The FBU executive and general secretary Andy Gilchrist have gone flat out over the last few weeks to persuade firefighters and control staff to accept an awful deal to end their long-running pay dispute.

"But that does not necessarily translate into a vote at the conference to reject it," says Paul Embury from the FBU in Islington, north London, and a member of the editorial board of the Red Watch rank and file paper.

"There is a feeling against the deal everywhere. Whether it breaks through into votes against it and strong mandates on delegates depends on

demoralisation over the way the dispute has been drawn out with the initiative constantly surrendered to the government.

The unofficial 30k website has been running results from votes at FBU branches. It showed between 60 and 75 percent of stations rejecting the deal.

"If you don't have effective organisation on the stations arguing for rejection and answering why we have ended up here, then the weariness with the dispute dominates.

"That's where people vote to accept, not because the offer's any good, but because they do not see an alternative.

## Lesson

"The executive have been organising to end this dispute on terrible terms. The great lesson is that we need rank and file organisation that can reject that.

"We will need it if the conference rejects the deal, because we know our leadership do not want to return to strikes.

## London weighting strike



Picture: John McLoughlin

**SCHOOL SUPPORT staff were on the picket line at John Scarr school in Tower Hamlets, east London, on Monday morning.**

**They and hundreds more workers employed by local councils across London were on strike all this week as part of their continuing fight for an increase in the London weighting allowance they get for the extra costs of living and working in the capital.**

**Most of those out were in selected schools, as part of rolling action called by their Unison union. Smaller groups of housing, parking and library workers were also out in some boroughs.**

## Journalists

## Tactics debate an urgent need

THE ALL-OUT strike by journalists in Bradford was set to end on Wednesday as Socialist Worker went to press.

Members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) have been striking against a below-inflation pay rise offered by Newsquest bosses.

The decision to go back was influenced by the fact that protection from being sacked while on strike was running out. Under the terms of New Labour's anti-union laws workers can be sacked after eight weeks on strike.

Strikers were due to meet in Bradford on Tuesday to decide whether to reballot for further action, which could renew protection from sacking for another eight weeks.

NUJ members at Newsquest titles in Bury and Bolton did the same last month.

Bob Smith, joint father of the chapel (workplace shop steward), said, "The dispute is still active and we have not settled yet. There is the possibility to go back out on strike in the future but we will have to see what the chapel thinks."

Newsquest Media, which is owned by media giant Gannett, made £69 million last year but pays graduate trainee staff as little as £12,000.

If the Bradford workers go back it would be the second dispute involving NUJ members and Newsquest where this has happened when action has come up against the eight week limit.

NUJ members at Newsquest titles in Bury and Bolton did the same last month.

The strategy of calling off action when faced with the limitations of the anti-union laws is a potentially disastrous way of fighting.

It allows bosses to sit tight and know they can see workers return to work after a few weeks.

Much better would be for the national union to organise the kind of solidarity which can hit companies hard and quickly win disputes.

And the NUJ could tell companies like Newsquest that if they use anti-union laws to sack workers the union would meet fire with fire, call out Newsquest NUJ members nationally and appeal to other unions for active solidarity.

**KATE COYNE**

## Campaign against national tests

## SATs conference proves a hit

THE 28 June conference called to launch the campaign to boycott the government's SATs school tests looks set to be massive.

Already parents, teachers and governors from all over the country have committed themselves to attending the conference.

Former NUT president John Illingworth will address the conference along with children's writer Alan

Gibbons.

Most importantly, we will hear from parents, support staff and, yes, even children themselves about how tests are ruining life in schools.

The conference will be more than a rally.

Everyone who attends should emerge with a clear plan about what they can do to make this campaign more effective.

The conference fee is £5 for

NUT members and absolutely free for anyone else. Lunch and a creche are provided.

**JON BERRY, secretary, Hertfordshire NUT**

**Boycott SATs conference, Saturday 28 June, 11.30am-3.30pm, South Camden Community School, London. For more details phone or fax 01727 835 554, or e-mail secretary@hertfordshire.nut.org.uk or nutjon@aol.com**

## GMB conference

THE SENSE that New Labour has betrayed its working class supporters ran throughout the GMB union's congress in Blackpool this week.

Delegates voted unanimously to review the donations to MPs who do not share the "aims, values and priorities of the union".

According to a GMB spokesperson this could see financial support removed from one third of the 100 MPs sponsored by the GMB, including Peter Mandelson.

The first days of the congress were dominated by the debate about the union's links with New Labour.

Leading figures in the union clearly recognised the depth of the bitterness against Labour. They had to devote a lot of energy to arguing why members should stick with the party.

Retiring general secretary John Edmonds used his farewell speech to administer stern criticisms of the government:

**"I still have the persistent feeling that this Labour government feels more comfortable with the employers' agenda," he said.**

Nevertheless Edmonds argued that trade unionists should work to reclaim Labour from the likes of the Hinduja brothers and Bernie Ecclestone, and for socialist values.

This message was reinforced by the GMB's newly elected general secretary Kevin Curran.

Curran had to reflect his members' anger at Labour and he proposed a far-reaching review of the union's links to the party.

Ian McCartney, the chair of the Labour Party, told delegates that if they pulled behind the government Labour could stay in office for a generation.

But McCartney's defence of Labour found little echo

among delegates.

In the debate on the conference floor Keith Rowley from London backed a motion calling on the union to switch funds from Labour to union-backed campaigns.

He argued, "I supported Labour for years, until Blair. I swallowed my revulsion and voted for them in 1997. But in 2001 I voted Socialist Alliance."

"This motion came from frustrated Labour members in my union branch. How can we back Blair, a man so hollow it's a wonder he doesn't explode?"

## Link

Chris Leary said, "Labour is opposed to our interests, with tuition fees, attacks on asylum seekers and a war no self-respecting socialist or trade unionist could support."

"The Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance have been making gains."

"They support our aims. We should be able to support them."

The GMB leadership managed to win a vote against weakening the union's links with Labour.

Speech after speech from the conference floor denounced the impact of Labour policies—on the minimum wage, long working hours, the decimation of manufacturing industry and privatisation.

And the debates over the link with Labour will continue to grow.

As delegate Danny Faith said at a Socialist Alliance fringe meeting, "Two years ago we moved that the union should stop supporting MPs who didn't support union policy. They wiped the floor with us."

"This time the motion was passed unanimously. This is a step forward."

**JUDY COX**

## Aslef conference

**DELEGATES TO the conference of the train drivers' union Aslef unanimously reaffirmed the union's support for the anti-war movement and condemned the war against Iraq.**

Conference adopted an executive committee report condemning the "unnecessary, immoral and unlawful" war.

General secretary Mick Rix argued trade unions

should be involved in politics, saying that "we have a right to question what is done in our name. What is now taking place in the world threatens all human beings and all workers."

There was anger at the way the government has abandoned investment in rail in favour of more road building. Delegates also voted for a return to national pay bargaining across the industry and for a "publicly owned and publicly accountable rail network".

Waterloo International delegate Hayley Elston said, "All train drivers should be equal. We need to harmonise pay and conditions—a difficult task but absolutely necessary."

This is one of the issues that Mick Rix is standing for re-election on in the next few weeks, and has the potential for delivering a united campaign across all grades in the industry and with the RMT union.

A motion calling for a campaign to cut drivers' working hours again heard speeches slamming the government.

But delegates were swayed by the argument, put forcefully by the leadership, that it is better to stick with Labour in the hope of winning change from within.

One delegate, however, spoke for many when he told the conference that it "gets harder each year to put this argument".

Some speakers for the leadership's position promised swift, dramatic changes in the Labour Party which would move it back to an Old Labour position.



## Saturday 14 June

● Stop the war on asylum seekers—demonstration and rally, 1pm, All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester.

● Jeremy Hardy versus the Israeli Army—film showing, 2pm and 4pm, Exeter Picture House. Organised by Exeter Stop the War Coalition. Phone 07855 732 435.

## Saturday 21 June

● Stop the War Coalition conference, 10am-5pm, Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London. Tickets £5. Phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6.

## Monday 23 June

● George Monbiot speaks on his new book The Age of Consent, 6.30pm, Bookmarks bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London. Phone 020 7637 1848 or e-mail events@bookmarks.uk.com to reserve your free place.

● Walter Mosley speaks on the US after 11 September, 6pm, Bookmarks bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London. Phone 020 7637 1848 or e-mail events@bookmarks.uk.com to reserve your free place.

## Friday 11 July

● Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.

● Stop the War Coalition conference, 10am-5pm, Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London. Tickets £5. Phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6.

● Bookmarks bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London. Phone 020 7637 1848 or e-mail events@bookmarks.uk.com to reserve your free place.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

## William Cook strikes



Saturday's rally in Sheffield

Picture: Socialist Worker

## Two years fighting a bitter struggle

TRADE UNIONISTS joined a march and rally in Sheffield on Saturday in support of the Cook's workers who have been involved in a two-year dispute.

The foundry workers were sacked in 2001 while the 90-strong workforce was taking official strike action over pay.

Ken Jackson, the right wing former leader of their AEEU union ousted by Derek Simpson, was leader of the union when the workers felt they had no alternative but to pursue their fight through employment tribunals. One of them, Eddy

Grimes, spoke to Socialist Worker: "We have been told we'll get a decision from the employment tribunal by the end of July. There were 37 workers involved.

"Today has been the first opportunity to get out on the streets. We wouldn't have even got this rally if Jackson was still in charge."

Around 200 joined the march with union banners representing workers from major manufacturing workplaces.

Derek Barlow, a senior AEEU-Amicus steward at Land Rover in Solihull, told Socialist Worker, "The way

these people have been treated is diabolical, having to wait two years for a tribunal.

"I'm glad we finally have a general secretary that is really taking up their case." Simpson, the AEEU-Amicus leader, and the newly elected TGWU leader, Tony Woodley, were warmly received at the rally.

Both referred to the "awkward squad" label that has been attached to the new breed of general secretaries. "We are no longer the awkward squad. We are the majority squad," said Woodley.

AROUND 200 people came to hear George Galloway speak in Ealing in west London on the continuing occupation of Iraq last week.

There was a great mix of people at the meeting, all united in their anger at Blair and his lies, while support for George Galloway was stronger than ever. This meeting proved wrong anyone who had thought the anti-war movement had disappeared. There was a real feeling that action against Bush and Blair must continue.

**GEORGE BUCKERFIELD**

ALMOST 200 people attended the Greater Manchester Coalition to Stop the

War's first people's assembly last Saturday.

Everyone involved felt this was a positive step forward.

After the assembly two delegates held a banner saying "Another world is possible" near a military band. The police arrived.

After delegates tried to intervene the police arrested James Thorne, a former British army officer, and charged him with a public order offence and assaulting a police officer.

James refutes the charges. Activists will support James. For full details see [www.manchesterstopthewar.org](http://www.manchesterstopthewar.org)

**RICHARD SEARLE**

AROUND 200 people gathered for the Hands off the Middle East event in Brighton last Saturday. It was organised by Sussex Action for Peace.

It proved there is a huge audience for political discussion on a range of issues.

As one participant who had never attended a political event before said, "Listening to an Iraqi speaker made the war in Iraq real to me for the first time and now I want to find out more."

**CATH SENKER**

OTHER anti-war meetings last week saw 180 people meet in Preston and 120 in Bradford.

## Palestine

UP TO 200 people protested outside Downing Street on Thursday of last week against Israel's targeting of international activists in Palestine.

"We want an inquiry into the deaths of the international targets by Israel," the Palestinian film-maker Leila Sansour told Socialist Worker.

"The British government has shown incredible lameness in tackling the situation."

Protesters marched down to Parliament Square where they were joined by members of solidarity activist Tom Hurnell's family. Tom is in a coma after an Israeli soldier shot him in the face in the town of Rafah.

## Postal workers

STRONG unofficial action has beaten back a management attack on postal workers at Ilford in outer east London.

Workers walked out on Wednesday of last week in protest at the suspension of three delivery staff.

They had been given too much work to deliver a few days earlier and had been unable to deliver it all. In line with policy, they brought the extra work back.

Management then instructed the workers to sort mail in their own time, without payment, to make up for this "failure". There was also talk of charging the workers with "wilful delay" of the mail—a serious offence that can lead to dismissal.

A mass meeting of over 100 voted to stay out.

On Friday management backed down, reinstated the men and dropped all charges. The backlog of mail will be cleared by paid overtime.

An Ilford CWU union member told Socialist Worker, "The workload has been going up and up. You used to be taking out two or three bags and now it's five or six."

"This creates an atmosphere where you're under pressure all the time. I'm glad that we stood up and showed we won't be bullied."

**URSLA HAWTHORNE**

## Health workers

## Action forces new offers

HEALTH WORKERS in North Lincolnshire were set to strike again on Friday of this week as part of their battle against poverty pay.

The workers in the North Lincolnshire and Goole NHS trust—which includes three hospitals in Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Goole—plan to strike again on Monday, and then on every other day during the week.

This is part of a series of strikes the workers have held against their bosses, private firm Carillion.

The porters, domestics and catering staff are determined to stick out to win £5.02 an hour minimum wage and parity with NHS terms and conditions.

In east London workers at Whipps Cross Hospital in Waltham Forest this week voted to escalate their strikes against ISS Mediclean.

The workers plan to strike for three days beginning next Wednesday.

They have been fighting alongside workers from two other east London trusts, at Homerton University Hospital and at the Mile End and St Clements hospitals for £5.43 an hour or a 10 percent rise (whichever is greater).

At Homerton University Hospital workers voted to accept an offer from ISS Mediclean of £5 an hour minimum wage now, rising to £5.15 next April.

The firm has agreed to work towards harmonising the terms and conditions, except pensions, of contracted and NHS staff by 2006.

In Tower Hamlets, the threat of action by workers at Mile End and St Clements hospitals forced their bosses, Compass Medirest, to offer a £5.17 an hour minimum wage now, rising to £5.34 an hour next April.

Medirest has offered workers a limited sick pay scheme and two days extra leave for those that have worked for the firm for three years or more.

These offers are from companies that previously refused to negotiate—and show that nothing terrifies them more than the prospect of workers taking action.

The 360 ancillary workers at Whipps Cross, however, are rightly convinced they can force ISS Mediclean to cough up more money.

Solidarity from health and other workers is crucial to make sure the strikes in North Lin-

colnshire and at Whipps Cross have the maximum impact.

**Send messages of support and donations:**  
Scunthorpe: c/o J Koper, 44 Cliff Garden, Scunthorpe DN15. Cheques payable to Scunthorpe Health Branch Hardship Fund.

East London: Unison, Mile End Hospital, Bancroft Road, London E1 4DG. Cheques payable to East London Healthworkers Solidarity Fund.

## Amicus

OVER 100 Amicus union members at IT company Fujitsu Services in West Gorton, Manchester, attended a mass meeting last week.

They met to discuss their pay claim, and the company's attacks on their long-standing union recognition and redundancy agreements.

Members voted overwhelmingly to ballot for industrial action, including strikes.

**Messages of support can be e-mailed to solidarity@ourunion.org.uk, or faxed to 08707 052 814.**

A MASS meeting last weekend saw over 120 airport workers at Liverpool's John Lennon Airport argue for possible strike action over huge pay cuts.

Management want to cut baggage handlers' pay by up to 40 percent. The GMB union members are spitting blood.

One worker said, "We work long hours, the shifts wear you out and now this."

**PAUL SILLETT**

**THE THREAT of strikes has forced bosses of the Hanson Brick company to make a new pay offer.**

Some 1,500 workers, members of the TGWU, Amicus and GMB unions, at the firm's 14 brick factories around Britain were set to go on a one-day strike on Monday of this week.

Bosses made an improved offer last week. They have now offered a 4 percent pay rise for 15 months, with an "inflation plus 1 percent" offer for the following 12 month period.

Union officials suspended the strike set for Monday of this week while workers ballot on the new offer.

If the workers reject the offer then they are due to hold a one-day strike on Monday of next week.

THE DISPUTE in Manchester between union electricians and their employers continued last week.

Twelve electricians walked out of the One Piccadilly Gardens construction site on Thursday 29 May after a plethora of serious irregularities by their employers.

Crown House & DAF were taking money from the workers' pay as a mandatory subscription fee for the Amicus union. This sweetheart deal has been used to try to avoid confrontation.

Builders at the site have been donating to the strikers' cause.

**STEFAN MIKULIN**  
**Send messages of support—phone 07813 456 831.**

## Nursery nurses

FOLLOWING ON from two weeks of national strike action, nursery nurses in Scotland are now taking a rolling programme of selective strike action to win a regrading claim of up to £4,000 per year.

Nursery nurses in Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Shetland and Orkney took two days of strike action last week.

Unison, the workers' union, plans to continue calling different regions out week by week

until they reach a settlement.

Around 5,000 workers have been involved in what has been for many their first taste of strike action.

Strikes were set to hit the Highland region on Wednesday and Thursday of this week which will close up to 50 nursery schools. Workers will take to the streets on Thursday to lobby the regional council headquarters.

**IAN HOOD**

## Bus workers

## Right route to win better pay

by HELEN SHOOTER

enough to get to the top rate because the hours, pay and conditions are so gruelling.

In South Yorkshire the company's deal would have meant some drivers getting £5.85 an hour and some £6.92 an hour.

An added insult was that First Group wanted to take two bank holidays from drivers and only backdate the pay claim to May, not April.

That sparked a massive rejection of the deal—some 1,051 votes to 70. The drivers then voted by 85 percent for strike action.

Up to 100 pickets were outside the Olive Grove depot in Sheffield, Britain's largest bus garage, on Saturday.

They pointed out First Group raked in a profit of £216 million last

year and its boss Moir Lockhead has a salary of £510,000.

"This is about keeping the managers rich and the workers poor," said one driver. "They can find the money for them but not for us. We make that profit for them."

"I start work at 4am. I can end up working until 12.30 at night, and we work on weekends. We're not allowed to have a social life."

A seven-day strike by 350 First Group workers in Norwich in January forced the company to retreat in its attack on working hours.

In South Yorkshire the strikers have the same determination to win.

The planned three-day strike next week can only increase the pressure on First Group and is also a chance for the strikers to raise support amongst people in local shopping centres.

# Socialist Worker

## Stitch-up at Labour's National Executive Committee

# Outrage at attempt to silence Galloway

THE LABOUR Party's top committee has sparked outrage by refusing to lift the suspension of anti-war MP George Galloway and even closing down discussion on the issue.

The undemocratic scenes at Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) on Tuesday of this week underline widespread suspicions that Labour's hierarchy will use very dirty trick against the most prominent anti-war figure in Britain.

Galloway has been suspended for likening the US and British attack on Iraq to

by KEVIN OVENDEN

wolves falling on prey and for calling on the head of the British army in Iraq not to obey illegal orders.

The Nuremberg trials established that "following orders" was not a defence when those orders amounted to war crimes.

Galloway told Socialist Worker, "I am bitterly disappointed at the continuing suspension of my party membership.

"This gagging order, which disables my parliamentary work and prejudices my rights, is without justification and virtually without

support in the party.

"A large number of NEC members were mandated to support my reinstatement. This is becoming a big issue in the labour movement.

"Trade unions including the TGWU, GMB, CWU, RMT, Aslef, many sections of Unison and others are all coming behind the campaign launched by Michael Foot and Glenda Jackson MP and I hope that it will succeed.

"But I will not remain indefinitely in this limbo. We are demanding this matter is resolved one way or the other swiftly.

"My constituents cannot be expected to put up with this situation indefinitely and I will not ask them to.

"An MP cannot be indefinitely silenced over honestly held views openly expressed. That is the kind of parliament they had in Baghdad."

### Efforts

Labour's deputy general secretary, Chris Lennie, is heading the "investigation" into Galloway and has promised to meet him on Monday of next week.

But there is no guarantee the suspension will be lifted quickly or not lead to expulsion from the party.

Threats of disciplinary action have also been made against left Labour MP John McDonnell after comments he made over Bobby Sands, the Republican hunger striker who was elected to parliament before he died on hunger strike.

That all points to greater efforts by New Labour to isolate the few principled left wing MPs.

Galloway has made it clear that he is not prepared to disown the comments he made "before, during or after the war".

In addition to messages



Galloway spoke to a lively lobby of Tuesday's National Executive Committee meeting in London

### What happened at meeting

THE CHAIR of the National Executive Committee, Diana Holland, opened the meeting by saying its officers (who are not party functionaries) had decided Galloway's suspension should be discussed.

Steve Pickering, a representative of the GMB union, spoke up strongly against the suspension, which was driven through over five weeks ago by Labour's unelected general secretary, David Triesman.

Christine Shawcroft, a left wing representative of the Constituency Labour Parties, also argued against the suspension. Fellow left winger Mark Seddon was called next.

But before he could speak, Sir Jeremy Beecham, who represents Labour councillors, said, "Move next business."

This bureaucratic trick is designed to kill off discussion and was voted on without any debate.

Only Mark Seddon, Christine Shawcroft, Ann Black (the third left wing constituency rep) and Steve

Pickering voted to continue the discussion.

Those voting against having a debate included Mike Griffiths of the GPMU and Maggie Jones and Nancy Coull of Unison, despite their unions' strong anti-war positions and widespread support for Galloway's reinstatement.

Constituency rep Shahid Malik also voted with the New Labour leadership. As if to add to the picture of a mockery of justice, deputy prime minister John Prescott and placeman Ian McCartney MP barked out, "Back the general secretary" as the vote was taken.

Tony Blair was not there. But surprisingly also absent were Mick Cash of the RMT, Jimmy Elsby of the TGWU and John Keggie of the CWU.

The RMT executive, incoming TGWU general secretary Tony Woodley and the CWU conference have all called for Galloway's reinstatement.

The NEC will not meet again until September.

of support and hundreds of donations to fund his libel fight against the Christian Science Monitor and Daily Telegraph, he has received enthusiastic support at a score of public meetings over the last few weeks. Over 3,500 people have attended them.

At each, there have been popular calls to translate the historic movement against the war on Iraq into a political challenge to New Labour.

■ **Donations to Galloway's legal defence fund should be made payable to "George Galloway Legal Fund" and sent to Davenport Lyons Solicitors, 1 Old Burlington Street, London W1X 2NL.**

## Freedom of speech

THE LABOUR Party's decision to suspend George Galloway for what he said in two television interviews against the war on Iraq is both wrong and potentially damaging to the party.

It should be lifted by the National Executive Committee.

Galloway's remarks about "wolves" and the issue of "illegal orders" may not be to

everyone's taste but free speech is even more important during an unpopular war opposed, when it began, by the majority of the British people.

Wasn't the export of such democratic freedom one of the coalition's "war aims"?

Many in the party think the intention is to keep Galloway in this limbo long enough to ensure he can't contest

the forthcoming selections in the new Glasgow constituencies.

The party can dispel such unworthy suspicions by concluding this matter without further delay.

Statement from Michael Foot, Mark Seddon, Glenda Jackson MP, Bill Spears general secretary STUC, Alice Mahon MP, Alan Simpson MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP

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